

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04481 251625Z

64

ACTION ARA-10

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SUBJ: CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: NACR SESSION II; AHUMADA SPEECH

REF: PANAMA 4480

SUMMARY: THE HARD REALITIES THAT PANAMA FACES IN ITS CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WERE UNDERLINED BY ADOLFO AHUMADA IN HIS SPEECH TO THE NACR ON JULY 18. HE EXPLAINED THAT PANAMA'S DECISION TO OPEN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO THE PUBLIC WAS A NEW, BUT PERHAPS TEMPORARY, PHASE MADE NECESSARY BY PUBLICITY AND TREATY OPPOSITION IN THE US HE TOLD HIS AUDIENCE THAT THE "BASES NO" SLOGAN WAS UNREALISTIC. PANAMA WOULD HAVE TO COMPROMISE BY ACCEPTING THE CONTINUANCE OF THE MILITARY BASES. AFTER OUT-LINING PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS, INCLUDING ALLUSION THAT US TREATY OPPONENTS WANT TO DISRUPT NEGOTIATIONS, AHUMADA ASSERTED THAT PATH FOR NEGOTIATION REMAINS OPEN. RADIO IMPACTO HAS ALREADY CRITICIZED AHUMADA FOR HIS "DANGEROUS" STATEMENTS ABOUT NECESSITY OF PERMITTING SOME MILITARY BASES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SPEECH BY ADOLFO AHUMADA, MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION AND OF PANAMA'S NEGOTIATING TEAM, SET ILLUECA'S GENERAL DISSERTATION ON THE US AND PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING POSITIONS INTO PERSPECTIVE AND EXPLAINED WHY THE GOP DECIDED TO

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 04481 251625Z

OPEN A "NATIONAL CONVERSATION" TO INFORM THE PEOPLE ABOUT THE

NEGOTIATIONS. SIGNIFICANTLY, HE FIRST EXPLAINED THAT THE PREVIOUS POLICY OF MAINTAINING PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO ADVANCE THE NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN A CALM CLIMATE. BUT THE NEGATIVE REACTION BY TREATY OPPONENTS IN THE US AND IN THE CANAL ZONE TO NEWS OF PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, MADE IT NECESSARY FOR THE GOP TO OPEN UP THE NEGOTIATIONS TO THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, THUS ENTERING A "NEW PHASE" IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS A TEMPORARY PHASE, AND THAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOT EXPECT FREQUENT REPORTS.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE DEFENSE ISSUE, AHUMADA STRESSED TORRIJOS' ASSERTIONS THAT CANAL DEFENSE DEPENDS UPON KEEPING CANAL NEUTRAL AND OPEN TO ALL NATIONS. HE ALSO CITED A NATIONAL GUARD STUDY WHICH CONCLUDED THAT THE BEST DEFENSE OF THE CANAL IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE TOWARDS IT. THE "REAL FACT", ACCORDING TO AHUMADA, IS THAT PANAMA IS NOT IN A POSITION TO CONTROL OR DEMONATE THE US WHICH HAS 14 MILITARY BASES IN THE CANAL ZONE. TO OVERCOME THE "TRAUMA OF PERPETUITY" (I.E., GET RID OF THE PRESENT TREATY) PANAMA WILL HAVE TO COMPROMISE AND ACCEPT THREE US MILITARY BASES FOR CANAL DEFENSE ON ITS SOIL FOR THE LIFETIME OF A TREATY. PANAMA WOULD, HOWEVER, HAVE INCREASING PARTICIPTION IN THIS DEFENSE. UNDER THE TREATY, THE US MILITARY PRESENCE WOULD FUNCTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH MUTUALLY AGREED UPON RULES. HE THEN RHETORICALLY ASKED: "COULD THIS SPECIAL REGIME MEAN WHAT SOME PEOPLE--CALL THE LEGALIZATION OF THE PRESENCE OF THE UNITED STATES IN PANAMA? COULD BE. BUT IT IS A LEGALIZATION ON THE BASIS OF CONDITIONS PANAMA CAN OBTAIN AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. EACT TIME WE ANALYZE THESE PROBLEMS WE MUST BE CAREFUL WHEN WE SAY 'BASES NO'" IN ABSOLUTE TERMS, AS THOUGH WE WERE NEGOTIATING WITH A SMALL NATION ON WHICH WE COULD IMPOSE OUR OWN CONDITIONS EASILY. WE KNOW WHOM WE ARE NEGOTIATING WITH, THAT IS IS NO WEAK NATION... WE BELIEVE THAT ASIDE FROM THE CRISES, THE PATH OF NEGOTIATION IS STILL OPEN, AND PANAM MAINTAINS ITS DISPOSITION TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATING THESE THINGS..."

3. AHUMADA TERMINATED HIS SPEECH WITH THE ASSERTION THAT PANAMIANS ARE UNITED IN THEIR DESIRE TO RECOVER THE CANAL BY NEGOTIATION OR, SHOULD IT BECOME NECESSARY, "THE PATH OF AGITATION." PANAMA WOULD SUCCEED, HE SAID, BECAUSE THE WORLD IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 04481 251625Z

SAYING TO THE US: "RESOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH PANAMA BECAUSE THE PROBLEMS OF PANAMA ARE THE PROBLEMS OF AMERICA AND ALSO ARE THE PROBLEMS OF THE UNIVERSE."

4. COMMENT: AHUMADA EVEN MORE THAN THE OTHER SPEAKERS, UNDERLINED THE REALITIES WHICH PANAMA FACES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THAT THE SLOGAN "BASES NO" (WHICH HAS BEEN SEIZED UPON BY STUDENTS AS A RALLYING CRY) IS NOT A REALISTIC DEMAND WAS MADE

CLEAR. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME A PANAMANIAN OFFICIAL IN RECENT YEARS HAS PUBLICLY ADMITTED THAT THE US MILITARY PRESENCE MIGHT BE "LEGALIZED" IN A NEW TREATY. ONE OF THE SACRED TENETS OF PANAMANIAN NATIONALISM HAS BEEN THAT THE US MILITARY BASES ARE NOT AUTHORIZED BY ANY AGREEMENT AND SHOULD NOT BE "LEGALIZED" IN ANY FUTURE AGREEMENT. AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT, THE ULTRA-NATIONALISTIC RADIO IMPACTO HAS ALREADY CRITICIZED AHUMADA'S REMARKS ABOUT THE CONTINUANCE OF US MILITARY BASES AS BEING "DANGEROUS." SIGNIFICANTLY, AHUMADA SIGNED PANAMA WOULD CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE NEGOTIATING PATH. JORDEN

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